

Margaret was born and raised in Belmont, Massachusetts and graduated from St. Patrick's High School in 1956. She attended Boston University's Medical Center where she majored in Nursing and graduated in 1960 to begin her distinguished record of public service.

With Michael, her husband of 37 years and graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point, Margaret spent much of her career serving the soldiers of the United States Army. As a military spouse, she volunteered in various capacities for the Army and Red Cross worldwide. Her service includes work in the Fort Meyer emergency room as well as employment as the Occupational Health Nurse for the 3rd Infantry motor pool soldiers and employees serving Arlington National Cemetery.

Her life as a military spouse included 23 moves across the world in 18 years. Margaret and Michael O'Neill are the proud parents of Kathleen, an attorney in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

Although she retires as the Occupational Health Nurse of the Longworth Building after 12 years of service, Margaret O'Neill will never slow down. She plans to take time to travel and attend Theology classes at Trinity College. In addition, Margaret will continue her volunteer work at St. Peter's in the District of Columbia assisting the poor and homeless.

Mr. Speaker, Margaret O'Neill leaves behind many friends in the Halls of Congress. We are lucky to have experienced her compassion and will miss her dearly. Her wisdom, kindness, and abilities are attributes to which all public servants should aspire. She has set an example for everyone on how to live a life of service, putting the greater interests of the community before one's own.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in paying special tribute to Margaret O'Neill. Our nation is served well by having such honorable and giving citizens, like Margaret, who care about their health and well being. We wish Margaret, her husband, Michael, and their daughter, Kathleen, all the best as we honor one of our dear friends.

#### SPECIALTY CROP COMPETITIVENESS ACT OF 2003

**HON. WALLY HERGER**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, December 8, 2003*

Mr. HERGER. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to become a cosponsor of the "Specialty Crop Competitiveness Act of 2003," H.R. 3242, legislation designed to maintain a viable and competitive specialty crop industry in the United States.

It is important to first note that an abundant, affordable supply of highly nutritious fruits, vegetables and other specialty crops is vital to the health of all Americans. Increased consumption of fresh produce will provide tremendous health benefits to consumers, as well as economic benefits to American farmers.

It follows that a competitive specialty crop industry is necessary to produce and sustain a safe and nutritious domestic food supply. A competitive specialty crop industry is also necessary to sustain the economic vitality of rural communities in northern California, and indeed throughout the entire nation.

Unfortunately, it is becoming increasingly difficult for U.S. producers to compete against heavily subsidized foreign producers in domestic and international markets. For example, the European Union provides subsidies of about \$11.7 billion per year to its specialty crop growers, while U.S. specialty crop growers receive no subsidies. In addition, U.S. specialty crop growers continue to face tariff and non-tariff trade barriers in many export markets, thus making it virtually impossible for our growers to improve sales through increased exports. In turn, production costs have escalated due to increased environmental and other regulations, and important crop protection tools have been lost, thus making it increasingly difficult to operate profitably.

Specialty crop growers from California and across the country believe federal agriculture policy must address the myriad of unique challenges facing their industry to assure its long-term viability. As such, they have joined together to craft H.R. 3242, and have requested my support.

The bill is designed to increase exports of U.S. specialty crops, improve efforts to protect agriculture from damaging pests and diseases, and provide funding for research necessary for improving the competitiveness of the industry. The activities authorized by this legislation represent a prudent investment in the future success of our \$58.7 billion specialty crop industry.

The cost of the bill is relatively modest when compared with other agriculture programs and most other federal programs. Nevertheless, it continues to be critically important, especially during this period of budget deficits and increased spending for our ongoing War on Terrorism and homeland security, for Congress to restrain federal spending. As such, I want to work with the bill's supporters to find acceptable offsets and/or savings from other federal programs that will ensure that the funding authorized under this legislation fits within the existing budget.

I look forward to working with the sponsors of the bill, Congressman DOUG OSE and Congressman CAL DOOLEY, toward future House consideration of this important bill for California agriculture.

#### INTEGRATING THE GULF OF MEXICO BORDER REGION

**HON. KATHERINE HARRIS**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, December 8, 2003*

Ms. HARRIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to announce that on November 5, 2003, the Gulf of Mexico States Accord and its business counterpart, the Gulf of Mexico States Partnership, Inc. signed a Memorandum of Cooperation on Short Sea Shipping with the U.S. Department of Transportation's Maritime Administration. The Gulf of Mexico States Accord comprises a partnership between my home state of Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, and the six Mexican states that border the Gulf of Mexico.

The signing ceremony for this Memorandum of Cooperation took place at the MARAD Short Sea Shipping Conference, which occurred in Sarasota, Florida, a city which is located in my District. Over 200 maritime indus-

try professionals from the United States, Mexico, Canada and the European Union attended this event. In recognition of the outstanding work of the Maritime Administration, the Accord and the Partnership, I request that the English version of the agreement be inserted, with my comments, into the RECORD.

The Memorandum of Cooperation, which constitutes the first such agreement in the Gulf of Mexico region, calls for information exchange, technical assistance and collaboration on issues related to the development of short sea shipping in the Gulf of Mexico. It represents a significant step toward full U.S.-Mexico collaboration on this vital trade issue.

The adoption of an enhanced regional emphasis on the Gulf of Mexico border states is vital as the NAFTA enters its second decade. The initiatives set forth in the Memorandum of Cooperation will leverage resources to develop this "water border," bolstering homeland security, spurring trade expansion, relieving transportation bottlenecks, and reducing pollution through the increased utilization of the Gulf of Mexico's ports and intermodal infrastructure.

The Memorandum of Cooperation also calls for support of the "Gulf of Mexico Trade Corridor Transportation Study", which is being spearheaded by the business Partnership in collaboration with the Accord and its Working Group on Transportation, Infrastructure and Communications. The study is based on the premise that the development of the Gulf of Mexico border, with its 62 million inhabitants in eleven U.S. and Mexican states, will have immediate and enduring regional impact on efficient investment in homeland security, identification of and investment in "critical" physical infrastructure, tourism and educational development, environmental sustainability, and overall community and international economic development.

The Gulf of Mexico basin constitutes a natural North American economic sub-region, comprising a seaborne NAFTA "super-highway" trade corridor, a common sustainable resource for tourism, agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture, and a common homeland security zone. The Gulf represents the ideal location for deepening and broadening the benefits of the NAFTA in preparation for the new flows of two-way trade that I believe will occur under the Free Trade Area of the Americas.

MEMORANDUM OF COOPERATION AMONG THE MARITIME ADMINISTRATION OF THE UNITED STATES, THE GULF OF MEXICO STATES ACCORD, AND THE GULF OF MEXICO STATES PARTNERSHIP, INC.

#### I. PARTIES

a. The party to this agreement representing the Maritime Administration (MARAD), is the Maritime Administrator or his designated representative.

b. The party to this agreement representing the Gulf of Mexico States Accord (GOMSA) will be the President of the Accord or his designated representative. GOMSA is a forum that was created to foster, promote and implement cooperative relationships between and for the eleven U.S. and Mexican border states that adjoin the Gulf of Mexico.

c. The party to this agreement representing the Gulf of Mexico States Partnership, Inc. (the Partnership) will be the President of the organization or his designated representative. The Partnership is a non-profit private sector Gulf States group that shares the GOMSA goal of fostering and promoting interests of the member states and region.